

KentuckyHistoricalSociety

A Day in the Life of a Civil War Soldier

Lesson plan author: Chase Goodman, Allen Central High School

Intended grade level: 11th

Number of students: varies

Major content: U.S. History

Unit: Civil War

Lesson length: 50 minutes (1 class period)

Context

- This lesson pertains to the unit study of the American Civil War. Students will gain insight into the life of a fighting soldier during the Civil War.
- Students will have prior knowledge of the Civil War from various educational experiences.
- The content will connect to real life situations when juxtaposed with the lives of modern soldiers fighting in the various American engagements abroad.

Learning Objective(s)

- Skills: Students will analyze and evaluate a Civil War lithograph image using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Students will analyze and evaluate correspondence between Civil War soldiers and their families.
- Knowledge: Students will gain understanding and insight into what the soldiers of the American Civil War endured.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SS-H-GC-S-5

Students will analyze and synthesize a variety of information from print and non-print sources (books, documents, articles, interviews, Internet, film, media) to research issues, perspectives and solutions to problems.

Resources, Media and Technology

The teacher will use an overhead projector for the VTS activity of this lithograph:



The teacher will use the following two documents for a "Think, Pair, Share" activity.

Document 1

July the 14th, 1861

Washington DC

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure - and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows - when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children - is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death -- and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and I could not find one. A pure love of my country and of the principles have often advocated before the people and "the name of honor that I love more than I fear death" have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me - perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar -- that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night -- amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always,

always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

Sullivan

Document 2

John Jackman a Kentuckian

April 5th, 1862

This morning, felt completely broken down. The wagon was so heavily loaded, and behind too, I had to try it afoot again -- the train rolled past me, and I was left a complete straggler. A staff officer, in charge of the rear, ordered me back to Corinth, but as soon as he was gone, I kept ahead. The next house I came to I stopped. The lady gave me some milk and bread to eat. I felt so bad, I thought I would go no further. Soldiers were straggling along all day. That evening, there was some artillery firing towards Shiloh. Again had fever that night.

April 6th

This day will long be remembered. Soon after the sun had risen, the firing of artillery became so general, and the roar of musketry could be heard so distinctly, I knew the battle had commenced. I wished to be on the field, but was not able to walk so far. The gentleman with whom I was staying had his only remaining horse caught, which I mounted. When I bade "mine hostess" good bye, she looked very "sorrowful" -- which affected me not a little & I never knew why she took such an interest in me. The gentleman walked and kept up. Four miles brought us to Monterey, and just beyond, we met some of the wounded on foot with their arms and heads bound up in bloody bandages, & I felt then that I was getting in the vicinity of the "warfare." Soon we met ambulances and wagons loaded with wounded, and I could hear the poor fellows groaning and shrieking, as they were being jolted over the rough road. Met a man on horseback with a stand of captured colors. We were now in proximity of the fighting, and we met crowds of men; some crippling along, wounded in the legs or about the body; others, no blood could be seen about their persons -- yet all seemed bent on getting away. I now dismounted and started on foot. I never saw the gentleman afterwards, who had kindly brought me so far on the road. Being in so much excitement, I became stronger. I met a fellow dressed in a suit of "butter-nut" jeans, who was limping, but I don't believe was scratched. He asked me, in that whining way: "Has you'ns been in the fight yet?" I thought he meant some general, and asked my "brown" interrogator what troops General "Youens" commanded. He seemed astounded, and at last made me understand him. I told him "no," and went on. I afterwards got quite familiar with the "youens" and "weens" vernacular of "Brown Jeans."

While passing a hospital on the roadside, I happened to see one of our company lying by a tent wounded. I went out to see him, and there found the brigade hospital established. There were heaps of wounded lying about, many of them I knew, and first one then another would ask me to give him water or do some other favor for him. While I was thus occupied, Dr. P told me to stay with him, that I was not able to go on the field -- that I would be captured. There was no one to help him, and I turned surgeon, pro tempore. I was not able to do much, but rendered all the assistance in my power. Part of my business was to put patients under the influence of chloroform. I kept my handkerchief saturated all the time, and was often dizzy from the effects myself. It was about one o'clock in the day, when I got there.

All day long the battle raged. Occasionally there would be a lull for a short time; but the cannon were never entirely hushed. They would break out in increased thunder, and the roar of the musketry would roll up and down the lines, vibrating almost regularly from one extreme to the other. All day long the ambulances continued to discharge their loads of wounded. At last night set in, and the musketry ceased; but the Federal gunboats continued shelling awhile after dark. Nearly midnight when we got through with the wounded. A heavy rain set in. I was tired, sick and all covered with blood. But I was in far better fix than many that were there. I sat on a medicine chest in the surgeon's tent, and "nodded" the long night through.

Instructions

Visual Thinking Strategies Activity, 10 minutes:

The teacher will use the Battle of Mills Springs lithograph. The teacher will project image onto screen. The teacher will ask these questions:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

Teacher will facilitate discussion among answering students by:

1. Paraphrasing their comments neutrally. Do not say "good," "correct," "wrong," etc.
2. Point at the area of the image being discussed by students.
3. Link contrasting and complementary comments made by students.

Think Pair Share Activity, 30 minutes:

Allow 15 minutes for reading and 20 minutes for discussion. The teacher will divide students up into groups of two. The teacher will pass out the two documents above. The teacher will pass out handouts to students with these questions:

1. Who wrote these documents?
2. What is the author's point of view?
3. Why do you think these particular documents were written?
4. Do you feel that these sources believable?
5. What do you think it was like to be alive at this time?
6. What things were different back then? What things were the same?
7. Where else might I look to find out more about these documents and what they discuss?
8. What claim(s) do the authors of the documents make?
9. How are these documents supposed to make me feel?
10. What information do you think the authors leave out?

Exit Slip, 5 minutes:

Students will answer these questions on a slip of paper:

1. Which letter was your favorite? Why?
2. How were the documents similar from each other? How were they different?
3. What insight did you gain into what it was like to be a Civil War soldier?
4. Why was this lesson important?

Assessment Plan

Objective / Assessment Organizer			
Objective Number	Type of Assessment	Description of Assessment	Adaptations and/or Accommodations
Objective 1	Formative	VTS (Visual Thinking Exercise with the Mill Springs Lithograph)	Extra time for two students with IEP's and 504 plans, paired with strong leader, itinerant teacher
Objective 2	Summative	Class discussion and completion of questionnaire.	Extra time for two students with IEP's and 504 plans, paired with strong leader, itinerant teacher

Impact

Students will be impacted by the descriptive nature of these letters. Students will gain insight and understanding into the life of a soldier during the American Civil War.

Refinement / Lesson Extension

The teacher will make changes as needed during implementation of lesson. This lesson could be broken up over two days if needed for time constraints. This lesson could be linked when discussing America's wars, as a tool to show the horrors of battle.